2009

Avian Haven Year End Report 2009

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Amy Campbell

"You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar," advises a proverb. Professional flycatchers like this juvenile Eastern Phoebe use neither, however, being quite expert at capturing flies with their beaks. For stories of this and other species, read on!

Rehabilitation 2009 Overview

For the first time in Avian Haven's existence, our case load decreased from the previous year. Compared to about 1225 birds in both 2008 and 2007, 2009's total was 1160 (17 held over from 2008 and 1143 new cases). The decrease reflects a drop in nestling admissions—fewer than 500 in 2009, compared to more than 600 in each of the previous two years. The summer of 2009 was unusually cold and rainy, which would have made raising a family difficult for birds that feed their babies insects. Looking at our most common native species, the American Robin retained its top-bird title, but the 97 robins of 2009 were significantly fewer than typical, while the usual second-place holder, Eastern Phoebe (79), was more numerous than normal and not far behind first place. Our other "top ten" native species were American Crow (59), Mourning Dove (55), Herring Gull (47), Blue Jay (43), Barred Owl (34), American Goldfinch (28), Song Sparrow (26), and in a near-tie for 10th place, Common Grackle (22) and House Finch (21). A species conspicuously absent from this list was Chimney Swift, typically admitted in numbers of 30 or more. Although we took in one injured adult, we had no swift nestlings at all in 2009; and as far as we know, no youngsters were brought to any other Maine rehabilitator in 2009.

Overall, we admitted a smaller number of raptors than last year—126, similar to the number we saw in 2007. After Barred Owl, the most common were Broad-winged Hawk (20), American Kestrel (16), and Bald Eagle (11). We had only 4 Osprey—a surprise after last year's 28. Numbers of non-native species were down as well: 53 Rock Pigeons, 34 European Starlings, 19 English Sparrows. Our species count, 111, was only slightly larger than typical; among the more uncommon admissions were several sea or shore birds, including a Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Gannet, Semi-palmated Plover, and Dovekie (see story on page 7). Native reptile admissions totaled 59, most of them car-hit Snapping and Painted Turtles. The Blanding's Turtle we told you about last year overwintered successfully and was released in May.

Of 651 mature birds admitted, a cause of difficulty was described or could be deduced for 320. Among them, 103 were struck by cars, 48 were injured by cats, and 42 hit windows. Eleven birds were shot, including two songbirds and one Great Blue Heron. Two birds died from lead poisoning acquired by either ingesting spent ammunition in a carcass (Bald Eagle) or lead fishing gear (Common Loon). The early months of 2009 saw many cases of salmonella among winter finches; although we did not have laboratory diagnostics, we assumed presence of the disease by its characteristic throat lesions in 9 Pine Siskins and 3 Common Redpolls (an additional 24 siskins and 14 redpolls, also apparent victims of salmonella, were admitted DOA). Several Herring Gulls retrieved from fast-food parking lots appeared to be coated in cooking oil; another was found impaled on a lightening rod. Among other more uncommon difficulties: an American Crow was injured by a windmill blade; a Turkey Vulture was entangled in soccer netting; a Common Loon's mouth and head were wrapped in fishing gear (including not only tangled line but also a lead sinker and a swallowed hook); a Bald Eagle was trapped in a manure pit (see story on page 6). Of these 4 birds, all but the crow recovered and were released.

Continued on page 3

Amy Campbell

Thanks ...

Businesses and Organizations

Aerie East
All Creatures Veterinary Hospital
Animal Wellness Center
Beal College
Belfast Cooperative
Chewonki Foundation
Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery
Dutton's Nursery and Greenhouse
Ellsworth Builders Supply
Foster's Family Pet Store
Harvest Time Natural Foods
Kisma Preserve
Level Best Land Services
Lightnin' Lumber
Little River Veterinary Hospital
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Maine Dept. of Marine Resources
Maine Fish Health Laboratory
Maine Goodies
Maine Warden Service
Mechanics Savings Bank
Nicholson & Associates
PenBay Veterinary Associates
The Penobscot Nation
The Raptor Trust
Sand Hill Strawberry Farm
SunRay Animal Clinic
WalMart
Wind Over Wings

Individuals and Foundations

American Foundation
Baker Street Trust
Shawne Boyle
Lewis Cisle
Cynthia Cushing
Janika Eckert
Mark Finke
John Sage Foundation
Kathy Kandziolka
Cher & Allan Lord
Mary Offutt
Osprey Foundation
Raelene & Ray Rogers
Roy Foundation
Nancy & Charlie Shuman
Marge & Don Sorenson
Winn Foundation Trust

Wildlife Biologists, Veterinarians, and Rehabilitators

Brad Allen
Buster Carter
Robin Dyer
Michele Goodman
Nate Gray
Eric Holmes
Keel Kemper
Jen Lewis
Andy Major
Jonathan Mays
Mark McCollough
Erica Miller
Mark Pokras
Kappy Sprenger
Charlie Todd
Flo Tseng
Sallie Welte


Diane Winn


Hannah Andersson

Because of their tendency to nest in close proximity to buildings, Eastern Phoebes are among our most common nestling species. Particularly plentiful early in the 2009 breeding season, for a short while in July we had admitted more juvenile phoebes than robins (but robins soon gained and kept a narrow lead). Phoebe nests sometimes fall from their locations on a narrow ledge, or may be removed when they interfere with a construction project. Once in a while, children destroy nests in a cruel prank, as was the case with the home of the three hatchlings shown here. Occasionally, we are brought nestlings whose mother was known to be dead; although fathers help with feeding, only females brood, so a single male parent cannot successfully raise a full clutch of young nestlings. If the father dies, a male seeking to replace him as the female's mate will kill her nestlings. Thus a few times a season, we are brought a youngster with multiple wounds, often found on the ground amidst dead siblings. Such was the history of a nestling who arrived on June 3 with not only head and face wounds, but also wing and leg fractures. We treated the wounds and splinted the broken bones, which healed rapidly. The fracture wraps were removed on June 11, and by July 1 the bird was perching and flying well. But where the head wounds had been, no feathers had re-grown. Not surprisingly, we began to call him "Baldy."


Amy Campbell

As a few more weeks passed, head feathers finally appeared, until only a small bald spot on the back of the head remained. But by then, the bird was mature and restless in captivity. On July 24, he attacked a swallow with whom he and other phoebes shared a flight cage. We moved Baldy to a larger cage, but the same thing happened with another bird two days later; he needed to go, and we released him that afternoon. ■


Diane Winn

Members of the public who rescue baby birds may try to feed the youngsters themselves, usually with poor results. This unfortunate Red-eyed Vireo arrived on Aug. 11 plastered with a food slurry inexpertly delivered with an oversize feeding syringe. We bathed the bird immediately, and within a few days, he seemed to have recovered. Also on Aug. 11, we admitted a Common Yellowthroat fed dog food by the rescuer, who believed the bird to be a finch. The person claimed to have been told by a state official to raise the bird himself; fortunately, he had sought another option. The vireo was released on Sept. 2 and the warbler on Sept. 5. Though we did not see the vireo again, the warbler was evident on a daily basis for several weeks. Through the screen doors, we would hear a chattering call from a nearby shrub, and the bird would dart out to retrieve mealworms tossed on the ground. By the end of the month, other Common Yellowthroats were on the property. We last saw our bird on Sept. 30, a day on which the instinct to migrate might well have prompted a departure for the species' wintering ground. ■


Glori Berry

Continued from cover

Unlike past years, when nestlings have comprised at least 50% of our admissions, only 43% of our 2009 cases (492 birds) had not yet fledged. Among those for which circumstances were reported, 159 nestlings were found on the ground, with no adults in view and the nest location or condition unknown. The parents of 36 youngsters were known killed or otherwise went missing from the nest area. Nests of 90 orphans were damaged or destroyed by natural causes such as storms, by human activities such as tree-pruning, or by domestic pets.

The Roost


Terry Heitz

Our new compound of habitats for owls was nicknamed "Fort Strix" (*Strix* is the genus of forest-dwelling owl species) by its designer and builder, Terry Heitz. Due to the heavy rains of early summer, construction got off to a late start, but three of the four "territories" were finished and buttoned up before snowfall, with each one occupied as soon as it was habitable. A view of the structure from the main-entrance side can be seen on the back cover; the remaining territory and connecting tunnel will be built as soon as weather permits in the spring. We thank Ellsworth Builders Supply for discounts on materials; grants that funded the project were awarded by the American Foundation, John Sage Foundation, Osprey Foundation, and Roy Foundation. This photo shows our resident foster-parent Barred Owls peering down from the high look-out of their new territory. Elegant roosting boxes for each territory were built by Jerry Stefansky.

Early in 2009, Avian Haven received a generous bequest of land from the estate of Marilyn Littlefield of Brewer. We appreciate the kindness shown by Lynn's personal representative, Mary Ellen McKenney, as well as the support of Lynn's other friends and family members. For now, the property will be used primarily as a release site. Near Lynn's favorite pine tree, we have created a sitting area featuring a bench made by Jerry Stefansky.

Our virtual roost, **www.avianhaven.org**, was designed and is maintained by James Skowbo. Look for some new features there in 2010.

Partners in Flight

During the long and busy summer days of breeding season, the camaraderie and dedication of our ace team helps maintain sanity and spirits. Clinic supervisor Shelley Spanswick oversaw many activities and did a wonderful job with 2009's most difficult cases. Interns Hannah Andersson (Sterling College) and Caitlin Kupferman (University of Maine) were first-rate, as were our regular onsite volunteers: Glori Berry, Amy Campbell, Sarah Cunningham, Amy Dillon, Terry Heitz, Laura Lecker, Marilyn McClelland, Kim Mullen, Beth Settlemeyer, Jerry Stefansky, and Janet Wiseley. All of these folks were helpful in other ways, including rescue and triage, transportation, and photography. Behind the scenes, Charlene Friedrich assisted with fund-raising; and board members Judith Herman and Allen Stehle provided wise counsel. Dr. Herman's homeopathic and surgical skills benefited cases that might otherwise have been hopeless.

In addition to folks already mentioned, Avian Haven's team includes a number of individuals and organizations that help in diverse ways, including not only direct financial contributions, but also non-cash support in the form of donated services, goods, discounts, or shared expertise. Though space in this report does not permit us to express appreciation for each and every one, those to whom we are particularly grateful this year are named in the sidebars.

On June 26, we were brought a young Black-capped Chickadee by people who said they'd had the bird for about two weeks, and who claimed that the bird had "no wings" when they'd found it. Over the phone, it had not been clear what that "no wings" meant, but on examining the bird, we were horrified to see that every flight feather had been cut close to the skin. Eventually, those damaged feathers would be replaced by a natural molt, but waiting for that process might have meant up to a year in captivity. We opted to try staggered plucking of the cut feathers. Shelley was in charge; once we had corrected some nutritional problems, she began a process that took roughly 5 weeks. To reduce the risk of breaking the fragile growing feathers, it was necessary to confine the bird to a soft-sided habit too small for flight attempts. We kept her in a small netted enclosure, whenever possible in visual contact with other chickadees. On Aug. 15, Shelley pulled the last of the cut feathers, and ten days later, we let the bird out into the flight cage. By then, all our other chickadees had been released, but this bird had made a friend: another chickadee was often seen clinging to the outside of the cage just opposite our bird on the inside. On Sept. 4, she was finally ready to go. When Diane opened her hands, the happy chickadee flew into a nearby tree and sang without stopping for several minutes before flying off, presumably in search of her new friend. ■


Glori Berry

"Frequent Flier" Volunteer Transporters

Anne Beaulieu
Angela Bellegards
Mary Bird
Bob Brooks
Amy Fletcher
Steve Harris
Gabrielle Isenbrand
Carol & Bob Jones
Jeremiah Jurdak
George Klueber
Kathleen & Russ Kravick
Vicki Kupferman
Don Lecker
Caron Leichtman
Carmine Leo
Bill & Eleanor Murley
Diane Ober
Yvonne Pollien
Bill Reid
Carolyn & Steve Richens
Alan Seamans
Tami Slowey
Susan Smith Hudson
Kimb & John Spender

On Oct. 14, 2008, an injured juvenile Peregrine Falcon was brought to the Tufts Wildlife Clinic in North Grafton, MA. He had a commonuted, open fracture (translation: the bone was broken in several places, and bone had penetrated the skin) of the right ulna, one of the two bones in the "forearm" of the wing. The fracture was given the best of expert treatment by Tufts veterinarians, and their X-ray a month later indicated good healing of the fracture. Over the next few weeks, some flight recovered, but it was clear that he would need more exercise over a longer term of care. On Jan. 19 of '09, he was transferred to Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick, ME; it was hoped that some time in their 100-foot cage would help him regain the strong flight a falcon needs. But a few months later, the staff at CFW was still concerned about maneuverability. They asked us to try the bird out in our flyway, a continuous 160' oval loop providing opportunities for banking and turning.

When the bird arrived here on Apr. 15, we started him out in the 40' flight cage adjacent to the flyway, wanting to be sure he would find food in a new environment. His flight there seemed labored, and at first, we were not optimistic about his prospects. But he improved rapidly; we moved him into the flyway a week later, and the next day, Marc counted him flying 5 laps! He was winded and on the ground when he stopped, but it was a good beginning; a week later, Marc counted a dozen laps. We asked Charlie Todd to weigh in; on May 21, he and Marc watched the bird fly laps and agreed: "Give him a chance."


Terry Heitz

His chance came just a few days later. On the 24th, the day this photo was taken, Shelley drove the bird to Bangor for release at a large field near IF&W headquarters. After leaving her hands, the bird flew … and flew … and flew until out of sight. ■

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Peregrine Falcon populations were among those suffering steep declines in the 20th century as a result of organochlorine insecticides such as DDT; the recovery of those populations has been more successful in some parts of the world than in others. Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Biologist Charlie Todd's account of Maine's peregrines is told in the Wildlife Division Research and Management Report for 2009: "In Maine, nesting peregrines were absent for 25 years following the 1962 disappearance of the last breeding pair in Acadia National Park. Releases of 153 young peregrines at 7 locations across the state during 1984-1997 enabled a second chance for the species. Memorable 'firsts' in the early years of recovery efforts in Maine included the first returning bird: an unpaired male at Baxter State Park in 1985, a territorial pair in 1986 and active nesting attempt the following year at Mount Kineo, and the first successful nestling at C Bluff Mountain in 1988." In 2009, Maine was home to at least 25 nesting pairs, the highest resident population count in about 60 years. Their territories include not only natural sites such as cliffs and coastal headlands, but also bridges and buildings in urban areas.

• • •

We cared for several other Peregrines in 2009. Although two of their stories had happy endings, the first of the year was a terrible tragedy. On Jan.13, Susan Hayward, President of the Stanton Bird Club, called to say that she had retrieved a Peregrine with a deep chest wound from Lewiston's Mill Complex. The bird had a life-threatening injury; arrangements were rapidly made for Susan to drive the bird to Augusta, where she met one of our volunteer transporters, Anne Beaulieu. When Anne arrived, we saw that the chest gash had exposed the sternum; the bird seemed at risk for death from blood loss. We quickly dressed the wound and took some additional emergency measures. The bird went into a warm intensive care unit, but died a few hours later.

Details of the incident emerged over the next few days. The injured bird had first been seen on the roof of an elevated walkway connecting two buildings of the complex. A security guard crawled onto the walkway roof, but the bird fluttered from there to the ground, where she was rescued by a bank employee accustomed to handling large companion birds. A gruesome coincidence is that, shortly before the Peregrine was discovered, dozens of dead robins and waxwings had been found on the ground of the Mill Complex courtyard. Fruit of ornamental crab apple trees planted there had attracted these birds, which evidently had been startled from their feeding and flown into the many windows in the buildings surrounding the courtyard. There were no witnesses to the incident, but perhaps the Peregrine was hunting songbirds when she herself hit a window. It is also possible that she had chased a pigeon through a broken window in a nearby abandoned building.

The Peregrine was banded as a nestling at a Vermont cliff in 2003, and had been nicknamed by the number/letter combination on her color band, "1/C." She had been the resident breeding female at St. Mary's Church in Lewiston since 2005, and had raised three youngsters in the 2008 season, the first and so far only successful nesting of Peregrines in Lewiston. The photo below of her on the fire escape of the Continental Mill building was taken in March of 2007.

Interestingly, the story of Lewiston Peregrines neither began nor has ended with 1/C. In 2002, Warden Dave Chabot helped rescue an injured female "U/X" (banded at a NH cliff in 2001) following collision with a wall. By 2003, she had paired with a male

Dan Pelletier

("4/8," a 2002 nestling from another NH cliff). Both birds disappeared prior to the 2005 season, when 1/C appeared with an unbanded male. In the spring of 2009, the vacancy created by the death of 1/C was filled by a new female. Although there were no offspring that year, the birds remained a couple, and as this report goes to press, are often seen together. And so the saga of Peregrines in Lewiston continues … and is followed by a host of citizens who have become devoted to them. ■

Another Peregrine at Avian Haven was a happier celebrity. On June 12, Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley was startled to see a Peregrine Falcon on the roof of his pick-up truck, which was parked in the fire station parking lot. He could tell the bird was injured; one wing drooped. Chris went back inside, and got fire-fighter Elliot Mitchell. They called to give us a heads-up, then notified the Camden Police Department. Their goal was to keep the bird in the area until she could be captured. But the bird hopped off the truck roof and tried to fly, made it across Washington Street, and landed on a second story window ledge of a condo unit under renovation. Elliot and Chris got permission from the unit's owner to enter the building; they hoped to catch the bird through the window. But when they made that attempt, the bird flew onto Washington Street. Assisting police held up traffic while a third capture attempt was made. Elliot's wife Leah, a fire-fighter based in Rockland, was able to get the bird in a blanket. Meanwhile, we had already put our friend and Camden-area transporter Diane Ober on standby; as soon as the bird was secured, she retrieved it from the Fire Department and drove it here.

The bird had a fractured radius, but the ulna was intact, and the fracture was well aligned. Her recovery was uneventful; about two weeks after admission, we moved her to a mid-size outside cage, and on July 9, into the flyway. Within a few days, she was flying multiple laps, and in a visit on the 16th, Charlie Todd agreed that she was "good to go." The next day, Marc drove her to Camden Hills State Park, where Chris and Diane did the honors, as shown in these photos. ■


Holly Anderson, Village Soup


Amy Campbell

On May 25, we were brought two Common Raven nestlings by folks who told us of finding the nest and the youngsters on the ground, with no adults in sight. On account of fear that the birds would not survive, they were taken; unfortunately, the people were on a wilderness camping trip many miles from home with no means of a quick return. They had no suitable nourishment for ravens with them, but kept them alive on camp foods such as hot dogs. When we got the birds, they were uninjured, despite what would have been a long fall from a typical nest site. The next day, we put them with the adult ravens we hold as surrogate parents. Confident on the basis of our foster moms' track record with previous nestlings, we were quite surprised to hear frantic alarm calls in the habitat and then to find one of the youngsters out of the nest and cowering on the ground. Inexplicably at first, the nestlings appeared to be terrified of the adults; but we soon realized that the youngsters had most likely imprinted to their human caregivers during the remainder of the camping trip.


Glori Berry

Imprinting may be described as a process by which young birds acquire a species identity. Social attachments formed within a certain developmental window become a template for future interactions. Normally, those early attachments are to the parents, but inappropriate imprinting can occur if other species (or even inanimate objects) are present during the sensitive time frame. Subsequently, social behavior will be directed toward objects resembling the alien caregiver, rather than toward the youngster's own kind. There appear to be species differences in vulnerability to inappropriate imprinting; some types of birds seem to have more of an innate template than a learned one. Birds in the corvid family (crows, ravens, jays) are especially affected by their early social experiences.

Human-imprinted birds are not good candidates for return to the wild; large birds that fearlessly approach people are likely to be harmed. Release in uninhabited wilderness areas would create other handicaps. Ravens depend on members of their large social groups to find food in the winter, but mal-imprinted birds are unlikely to join such groups. At various points through the summer and fall, we tried putting these birds with our surrogates and other ravens in rehabilitation, wondering if they could acquire even minimal appropriate social skills. But they did not get along with the other birds, and in one encounter, the larger of the imprinted birds attacked one of our surrogate females. After that, we housed them separately and began making inquiries for placement at a facility licensed to hold wild birds for conservation education. As this report goes to press, a final decision on their new home has not been made, but all of the options on the table are good ones. We are sure they will be outstanding in their new roles as wildlife ambassadors. ■


Glori Berry

In all we cared for 14 eagles in 2009—11 new admissions, and 3 carried over from 2008. The most unusual difficulty among them was an adult trapped in a large manure pit in Corinna. Farmhands were able to maneuver the bird into a corner, from which Warden Skip Bates made the capture. Terry was more smelly than soiled when he arrived here with the bird! Luckily, the bird had not been "soaked to the skin," and after hosing off the manure, only one bath was needed to clean the feathers. He was released a week later. Among the others were two losers of eagle combat and five premature fledglings that, for various reasons, could not be left at their nest areas. The sixth juvenile had a more unusual story.

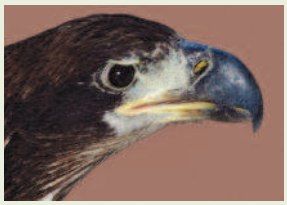
On Aug. 25, a Steuben resident named Steve Resotko saw an object on the shoreline of Dyer Neck from his boat in Dyer Bay. At first he thought it was a stick or log, but, as he approached more closely, saw that it was a juvenile eagle standing on a pile of seaweed. Once on shore, when he got within ten feet and the bird had not moved, he knew the eagle was in trouble. Steve was able to get his jacket around the bird, then carry her to his boat, then travel by water back to the docking ramp. There, he was challenged by someone who warned that he would be fined thousands of dollars for interfering with an eagle. Steve replied, "So okay, I'll pay the fine, but this bird's hurt, and I'm not leaving it to die." He returned home with the bird, and made the calls that led him to us. Steve drove the first leg of a three-jump relay, and we had his passenger a few hours later.

We judged the eagle to be a first-year bird by plumage, and female on the basis of size. She was weak and extremely emaciated, weighing only 2.75 kg (about 6 pounds). We took a quick X-ray (which revealed no fractures), gave her some electrolyte-containing fluids, and let her collapse. But the first thing we'd noticed hadn't been her size or weight—it was her leg bands. Eagles banded in Maine nests wear a red color band, but this girl had a green one. We knew she was "from away"—and inquiries to our eagle-banding friends at BioDiversity Research Institute pointed to New Jersey. But our eagle biologist, Charlie Todd, was away that week, as was his counterpart in NJ, Kathy Clark.

For the first couple days, we tubed simple liquid foods, and worried, as the bird stood with her head down, barely moving. But on the 28th, there was a remarkable turn-around when she was offered her first solid foods recognizable as prey (lab mice and small fish). She gobbled them down, and from then on, ate voraciously. On Sept. 2, Kathy returned from vacation and saw the waiting e-mails about the bird. She replied immediately that the bird had been banded as a singleton nestling near Chatsworth, NJ (in the Pine Barrens), on May 20, 2009. We were glad to have the confirmation, because, by then, we were already calling the bird "Jersey Girl," inspired by the Bruce Springsteen song of that name. Fledgling eagles do often leave their home states; NJ birds Kathy had tracked in the past had tended to travel south rather than north. But Steve had found Jersey Girl only two days after Hurricane Bill had passed through the Maine coast area, so one speculation is that the bird hitched an unexpected ride in the storm.

Jersey Girl gained weight quickly, and we soon had her outside in the company of two other juveniles; this surrealistic-looking photo of her in flight shows the green leg band identifying her home state. The possibility of taking her back to NJ for release was considered, but was outweighed by the advantages of a Maine release in great eagle habitat along the Kennebec River just north of Merrymeeting Bay, in the company of her new friends. Terry is also a Pine Barrens native, so it was natural that he would do the honors on release day, Oct. 11; this photo shows her lift-off. On her way out the door, she weighed 4.75 kg (about 10.5 pounds), nearly double her intake weight. Several other eagles were seen cruising the sky that day, possibly including other juveniles we'd released at the same site two weeks earlier. It wasn't until December, after a story about the bird appeared in a NJ newspaper, that we learned Jersey Girl had been banded by our friend Erica Miller, DVM at Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research (DE). ■


Glori Berry



Glori Berry

Feathering the Nest

In 2009, about 40% of our total cash outflow comprised capital expenditures such as the new owl compound and other acquired assets. Of the remaining proportion that funded operating expenses, in decreasing magnitude, the expense categories were payroll/stipends, general corporate (insurance, utilities, etc.), food/supplies, professional services, travel, and repairs/maintenance. As was the case last year, about three-quarters of our total income was from foundation and trust grants, with individual and business donations comprising the remaining one quarter.

Looking ahead to the coming season, as already mentioned, the remaining sections of Fort Strix will be completed in the spring. After that, a likely possibility is built-in pools for the eagle habitats, and/or an additional flight cage; your tax-deductible support determines what we can accomplish. Reducing use of forest resources is an important part of our conservation commitment; please let us know if we may send future issues of this report to you electronically rather than in paper. In 2010, folks on our electronic mailing list can also receive quarterly slide shows featuring our most photogenic guests. To sign up, just send us an e-mail (**info@avianhaven.org**).

One of our most unusual admissions of 2009 was a Dovekie found in South Thomaston on Dec. 27. Sometimes called "Little Auk," this tiny seabird breeds in Arctic regions, particularly Greenland, but winters at sea off the northeast coast of North America. What was he doing on land? Ornithologists use the term "wreck" to refer to seabird strandings after storms; historically, some Dovekie wrecks have involved enormous numbers of weak and starving birds. The same day we admitted our little auk, Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick admitted four. This species was a first for us; over the next two weeks, we stayed in touch almost daily with our colleagues at CFW, and talked, as they did, to rehabilitators who had experience with Dovekies and other alcids (Family *Alcidae* also includes auks such as murres, guillemots and puffins).

An average weight for a Dovekie is about 160 grams (roughly 5.5 oz.); our little guy weighed only 91 on intake. He seemed to favor one foot, but there were no other apparent injuries, and we concentrated on building his weight up—a particular challenge given that the species has an extremely high metabolism. We could not offer him natural foods of live krill and plankton; though he occasionally took small live fish, the staple of his recovery diet had to be tube fed. Things went as well as could be expected for the first few days, but a week after his stranding, effects of frostbite appeared on the foot he had favored on intake.


Glori Berry

In winter conditions, the feet of pelagic birds are normally in seawater; off the coast of Maine, mid-winter ocean temperatures might range from 35-40° F. When seabirds are stranded inland, their feet come in contact with significantly colder surface or air temperatures. Tissue damage may result from direct freezing injury as well as constriction of blood vessels—but signs may not appear for some time after the exposure. There is no cure for frostbite, though some topical and systemic treatments may reduce the amount of tissue loss. At some point, the extent of that loss will become evident in a demarcation of viable from nonviable tissue. A few days into January, as this photo shows, it was clear that our bird would lose the outermost half of the webbing and toes on the "bad" foot.


Diane Winn

Dovekies dive with their wings, literally flying underwater as they forage. Despite a loss of agility on the breeding ground, we would have considered releasing him with one compromised foot, and hoped against hope that the other foot would remain healthy. For a few days the webbing stayed soft and supple, and the bird continued to gain weight. But on Jan. 7, he began limping to favor what had been the "good" foot, and over the next few days, there were signs of frostbite on that foot as well. During this period, the little auk also lost interest in live fish, and was reluctant to spend any time in either fresh or salt water. By Jan. 12 he was fighting the feeding tube and losing weight, and on the morning of the 13th, we could see that the second foot would be lost. The decision to euthanize was not hard to make, but its aftermath was deeply sorrowful, for he had captured our hearts. ■

May your spirit find peace in the oceans of your homeworld, little one; we'll never forget you.

In Closing . . .

The more uncommon birds we saw in 2009 were vivid reminders of the perils faced by some species. Cousin to the Dovekie, the Great Auk is gone forever; yet, through diligent efforts of multi-agency partnerships worldwide, it appears that the Peregrine Falcon can escape a similar fate. Although the distinctiveness of rare birds may have a sad or hopeful overtone, encounters with them are always exciting and memorable. But there is something comforting in recurring experiences with more familiar species: "The first robin, the first bluebird, the first song sparrow, the first phoebe, the first swallow, is an event which we mention to our neighbor, or write in our letters to our friends. It is an old story with a new interest. The birds have lived, and we have lived to meet again the old scenes. They bring us once more the assurance of the unfailing return of spring, and the never-ending joy and fecundity of life" (John Burroughs, *The Familiar Birds*).

Until next year –

Diane & Marc

Diane Winn & Marc Payne
Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center, Freedom, ME
207-382-6761 • www.avianhaven.org

AVIAN HAVEN

A nonprofit wild bird rehabilitation center dedicated to the return of injured and orphaned wild birds of all species to their natural roles in the wild.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of $ _____

☐ Please send me a receipt.

Name: _____

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_____

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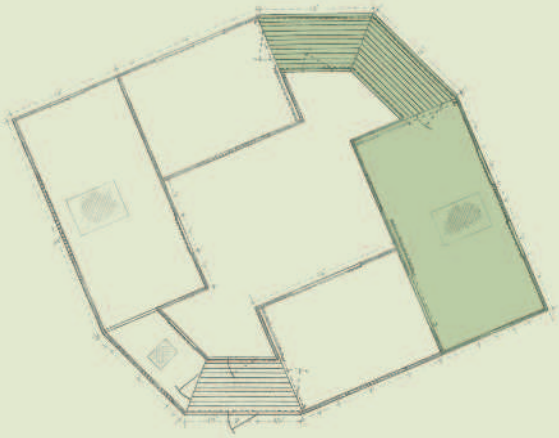
☐ Please send next year's annual report electronically.

Credit card and PayPal donations may be made through our website: **www.avianhaven.org**.

Your donations help save birds' lives:Thank you for joining the community of our supporters.

418 N. PALERMO RD. FREEDOM, ME 04941

Owl Compound "Fort Strix"



Shaded sections will be completed in 2010

Photo and drawing by Terry Heitz

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